1669

THE JUDGMENT OF Mr. BAXTER CONCERNING CEREMONIES AND CONFORMITY.

WITH

A SHORT REFLECTION

upon a Scandalous *Pamphlet*, Intituled,

A Propoſition for the Safety and Happineſs of the KING *and* KINGDOM.

IN

A LETTER to a GENTLEMAN of the *Houſe of Commons.*

LONDON, Printed for *R. Jenaway*, in the Year 1667

SIR,

I *Suppose the Pamphlet which you sent mee, was designed rather to let me see the Impudence of this Licentious Age, than to draw me into the Impertinence of Answering it. The Lameness of the Style, the Sence, and the Coherence, but especially the Weakness of what he calls* Arguments, *make me ashamed to deal with such an Adversary. Yet in running it over, I could not but observe this one Confession:* It is not the Dignity of the Bishops, their Lordships and Revenues; It is not their Cathedrals, Organs, and their Divine Service in what State and Magnificence they please; It is not Common Prayer, no nor any Ceremony of the Church whatsoever for all its significancy, if it P. 18, 19.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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be but a circumstance of Worship, and no more, that could hinder most of the Sober *Nonconformists* to come over to you; but it is these Declarations, Subscriptions, and Oaths which you impose on them in your Acts.

Now, though I think it no hard matter to make it appear, that these Declarations, Subscriptions, *and* Oaths, *contain nothing in them but what is absolutely necessary to the Safety of the Church and State; and that those men who refuse to make such Acknowledgments and Engagements, are utterly unfit to be intrusted with the Cure of Souls, and the office of* Preaching *to the People; which, like other good things, as it is excellent in the Use, so is it no less dangerous in the Abuse: Yet supposing, for once, that these* Oaths *and* Subscriptions *were as unlawful, as they would have the World believe; What is this to*

those that are not required to Subscribe *or* Swear? *Is not this a plain Acknowledgement, that notwithstanding all these Clamors against the Governours, and the Ceremonies of the Church, yet there is indeed no just ground of separating from either, since no* Swearing or Subscription *is required of the Multitude, of which they so much boast, and whose Cause they pretend to plead? Of these, by their own Confession, as many as are* Judicious *and* Sober, *may* come over *and Conform: So that we have only a few Factious Men (that call themselves Ministers) that make all this Noise; as if for their sakes, the* KING *and* PARLIAMENT *must undoe all that they have done, for the Restoring of Religion and good Order in the Church, and preserving Peace in the State: and because the* City *and the* Ships *have been lately* burnt, *these Men that are well* P. 6.

skilled

skilled in blowing Coals, must have leave to set the whole Kingdome in a Flame.

The Worthy Gentlemen of your House, will, I hope, consider this: Which that you may not look upon only as an unwary word dropt from a loose Pen, I shall add, for Confirmation, what I long since observed in a Book written by a great Rabbie of that Tribe, under the Title of Five Disputations of Church Government, and Worship: *Printed at* London, 1659. *A time, when he could have but small encouragement to say more than he thought in this matter.*

THE

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THose Modes or Circumstances of Worship which are Necessary *in Genere*, but left undetermined by God *in Specie*, are left by God to humane Prudential Determination: (else an Impossibility should be necessary.) But many such there are, that are Necessary *in Genere*, but left undetermined of God *in Specie*; therefore many such are left to humane Prudential Determination. *Disp.* 4. *P.* 361.

§. 5. Yet it is in the Power of man to determine of such Modes and Circumstances as are necessary to the per- *Disp.* 5. *P.* 400.

performance of that Worſhip which God hath inſtituted in his Word: and therefore lawful Governors may in ſuch Caſes bind us by their Commands.

P. 400. 1. It is left to humane Determination, what *Place* the Publick Aſſemblies ſhall be held in.

P. 401. 2. It is left to man to determine of the *Time* of Holy Duties, except only where God hath determined of it already.

Ibid. 3. It is left to the Determination of humane Prudence, what *Utenſils* to employ about the Publick Worſhip of God.

Here therefore we muſt thus conclude,

P. 423. 1. That every miſordering of ſuch great affairs, is the ſin of them that do it.

2. But yet that the Subject is not exempted from Obedience by every ſuch miſtake of the Governor: but by ſome, he is.

§. 67. If the miſchooſing of ſuch Circumſtances, by Church-Governors, be but an Inconvenience, and do not deſtroy the Ordinance it ſelf, or fruſtrate the Ends of it, we are to obey: 1. For he is the Judge of his own work, and not we: 2. The thing is not ſinful, though inconvenient: 3. Obedience is commanded to our lawful Governors.

P. 424. *We muſt obey in all things lawful.*

And when we do obey in a Caſe of Miſcommanding, it is not a doing evil, that good may come of it, as ſome do miſconceive: but it is only a ſubmitting to that which is ill commanded, but not evil in him that doth ſubmit. It is the Determiner that is the cauſe of the incon-

Inconvenience, and not the Obeyer. Nor is it inconvenient for me to Obey, though it be worse perhaps to him that Commandeth. While he sinneth in Commanding, he may make it my Duty to Obey.

§. 6. *Diff.* 4. We must distinguish between Ceremonies imposed by a *Lawful Magistrate*, or *Church-Governors*, and such as are imposed by *Usurpers*, or Men without Authority. P. 396.

§. 25. Prop. 12. *It may be very sinful to command some Ceremonies, which may lawfully, yea, must in Duty be used by the Subject when they are commanded.* P. 398.

§. 27. Prop. 14. *Yet certain things that are commonly called Ceremonies, may lawfully be used in the Church upon Humane Imposition; and when it is not against the Law of God, no person should disobey the Commands of their Lawful Governors in such things.*

Of Set-Forms, and the Book of Common-Prayer.

1. A Stinted Liturgy is in it self Lawful. *Diff.* 4. P. 358.

2. A Stinted Liturgy in some parts of Publick Service, is ordinarily necessary.

3. In the parts where it is not of Necessity, it may not onely be submitted to, but desired, when the Peace of the Church requireth it.

The safest way of Composing such a Publick Form, is, to take it all, for Matter and Words, out of the Holy Scriptures. P. 359.

& Yet is not this of such Necessity, but that we may depart from it, or use it, if the Form of Words be not from Scripture.

Prop. 1. *A Stinted Liturgie is in it self Lawful.*

This is thus proved:

Argument 1. *That which is not directly, or consequentially forbidden by God, remaineth lawful: A stinted Liturgy is not directly, or consequentially forbidden by God: therefore it remaineth Lawful.*

The *Major* is undoubted, because nothing but a Prohibition can make a thing unlawful. *Sin is a transgression of a Law: where there is no Law, there is no Transgression*: And yet I have heard very Reverend men answer this, *That it is enough that it is not commanded, though not forbidden.* Which is plainly to deny both Scripture and Civil Principles.

P. 361. Now for the *Minor*, *That a stinted Liturgy is not forbidden*, we need no other proof, than that no Prohibition can be produced.

P. 364. Argument 6. *If it be lawful for the People to use a stinted Form of words in Publick Prayer, then is it in it self lawful for the Pastors: but it is lawful for the People*: for the Pastors prayer (which they must pray over with him, and not only hear it) is a stinted Form to them, even as much as if he had learnt it out of a Book. They are to follow him in his Method and Words, as if it were a Book-Prayer.

Argument 7. *It is lawful to use a Form in Preaching: therefore a stinted Liturgy is lawful.*

1. Because Preaching is a part of that Liturgy.
2. Because the reason is the same for Prayer, as for that, in the main.

Arg.

Argument 8. *That which hath been the practice of the Church in Scripture-times, and down to this day, and is yet the practice of almost all the Churches of Christ on earth, is not like to be unlawful: but such is the use of some pinned forms of Publick Service: therefore, &c.* That it was so in the *Jews* Church, and approved by Christ, I have shewed. That it hath been of ancient use in the Church since Christ, and is at this day in use in *Africk*, *Asia*, *Europe*, even among the Reformed Churches in *France*, *Holland*, *Geneva*, &c. is so well known, that I think I need not stand to prove it: yea, those few that seem to disuse it, do yet use it, in *Psalms*, and other parts of Worship.

As for the *Common-Prayer* it self, I never rejected it because it was a Form, nor thought it simply unlawful because it was such a Form, but have made use of it, and would do again in the like case. P. 421.

Of Ceremonies.

The Ceremonies controverted among us, were especially, *The Surplice*, *the Gesture of Kneeling in receiving the Lords Supper*, *the Ring in Marriage*, *Laying the hand on the Book in taking an Oath*, *the Organs and Church-Musick*, *Holy-dayes*, *Altars*, *Rails*, and the *Cross in Baptism*. P. 409.

Of the Surplice.

Some decent Habit is necessary, either the Magistrate, or the Minister himself, or the Associated Pastors must P. 409.

must determine what. I think neither Magistrate nor Synod should do any more than hinder Undecency: But yet if they *do* more, and tye all to *One Habit* (and suppose it were an undecent Habit) yet this is but an *imprudent use of Power*. It is a thing within the Magistrates reach; he doth not an *alieno* work, but his own work amiss: and therefore the thing *in it self* being *lawful*, *I would obey him*, and use that garment, if I could not be dispensed with. Yea, though *Secondarily* the *whiteness* be to signifie Purity, and so it be made a teaching sign, yet would I obey.

Of Kneeling at the Sacrament.

P. 411. But yet, as sinfully as this Gesture was imposed, for my part I did obey the Imposers, and would do, if it were to do again, rather than disturbe the Peace of the Church, or be deprived of its Communion. For God having made *some Gesture* necessary, and confined me to none, but left it to Humane Determination, I shall submit to Magistrates in their proper work, even when they miss it in the manner. I am not sure that Christ intended the example of himself and his Apostles, as obligatory to us that shall succeed. I am sure it proves *fitting lawful*; but I am not sure that it proves it *necessary*: (though *very convenient*.) But I am *sure*, he hath *commanded me Obedience and Peace*.

Of the Ring in Marriage.

P. 411. And for the *Ring in Marriage*, I see no reason to scruple the lawfulness of it: For though the Papists make a *Sacrament* of *Marriage*, yet we have no reason to

to take it for any Ordinance of Divine Worship; any more than the solemnizing of a Contract between a Prince and People. All things are sanctified and pure to the pure.

Of Organs and Church Musick.

And for *Organs*, or other *Instruments of Musick* in Gods Worship, they being a Help partly *Natural*, and partly *Artificial*, to the exhilerating of the spirits, for the praise of God, I know no argument to prove them simply unlawful, but what would prove a *Cup of wine* unlawful, or the *tune* and *meeter*, and *melody* of singing unlawful. P. 412.

Of Holy-Dayes.

Nor for my part do I make any scruple *to keep a Day in Remembrance of any Eminent Servant of Christ, or Martyr, to praise God for their Doctrine or Example, and honour their Memorial. P. 412, 413. *In point of Lawfulness; For Conveniency is according to several accidents.

But the hardest part of the Question is, *whether it be lawful to keep Days, in celebrating the Memorial of Christs Nativity, Circumcision, Fasting, Transfiguration, Ascension, and such like?*

And yet for all this I am resolved, if I live where such Holy-days as these are observed, to censure no man for observing them; nor would I deny them Liberty to follow their judgments, if I had the power of their liberties; provided they use not reproach and violence to others, and seek not to deprive them of their Liberties. P. 416.

Yea

P. 417. Yea more, I would not onely give men their Liberty in this, but if I lived under a Government that peremptorily commanded it, I would observe the outward rest of such a Holi-day, and I would preach on it, and joyn with the Assemblies in Gods Worship on it. Yea, I would thus observe the Day, rather than offend a weak Brother, or hinder any mans salvation, much more rather than I would make any division in the Church.

Of Altars, and Rails.

Ibid. And for the next Ceremony, the *Name and form of an Altar*; no doubt it is a thing indifferent, whether the Table stand this way, or that way: and the Primitive Churches used commonly the names of *Sacrifice*, and *Altar*, and *Priest*, and I think, lawfully: for my part I shall not be he that shall condemn them.

Ibid. I conceive that the dislike of these things in *England* (the form and name of an Altar, and the Rails about it) was not as if they were simply evil.

P. 401, 402. Whether we shall receive the Lords Supper at a Table, or in our seats; and whether the Table shall be of wood or stone? whether it shall be round, or long, or square? whether it shall stand in the East or West-end of the Temple, or in the middle? whether it shall have Rails, or no Rails? All these are left to Humane Prudence.

Of the Cross in Baptism.

P. 417. But of all our Ceremonies, there is none that I have more suspected to be *simply unlawful, than the Cross in Baptism.*

Yet

Yet I dare not *peremptorily say, that it is unlawful* : nor will I *condemn either Antients or Moderns that use it* : nor will I *make any disturbance in the Church about it*, more than my own forbearance will make. P. 418.

I presume not to censure them that judge it lawful; but onely give the Reasons that make me doubt, and rather think it to be unlawful, though still with a suspicion of my own understanding.

Ambros. contr. Symmach.

Unusquisque patienter ferat, si non extorqueatur Imperatori, quod moleste ferret, si ei extorquere cuperet Imperator.

FINIS.